



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Selves and others: reflections on sport in South Asia

**Citation for published version:**

Bates, C & Armstrong, G 2001, 'Selves and others: reflections on sport in South Asia', *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 191-205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930120083800>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/09584930120083800](https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930120083800)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Contemporary South Asia

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## SELVES AND OTHERS: REFLECTIONS ON SPORT IN INDIA

### Introduction to a Special Issue on Sport of the journal *Contemporary South Asia* Volume 10, Issue 2, 2001

Gary Armstrong and Crispin Bates

Warfare, politics, nationalism and class struggle are all intimately bound up in the history of Indian sport. One of the most ancient of India games, Polo, like other sports of hunting and chase, was developed by the Princely rulers of Rajasthan as a training for warfare. It was no surprise therefore that the British, as inheritors of the mantle of Indian rulership took to it too.

Other, more popular sports, were more than mere exercise and entertainment, but bonded together local communities, as well as serving as a means of acting out petty rivalries and conflicts. More substantial conflicts might also emerge within this arena. Thus, the victory of Calcutta's Mohun Bagan football team over a team fielded by the East Yorkshire regiment, gave not only a fillip to Calcuttan pride but also nationalist sentiments. This was the first time an Indian team had won the Indian Football Association shield, and they did so resoundingly as the story is now told, defeating the Yorkshire team before a packed stadium by two points to nil (the English version is that the score was 2-1). Shibdas Bhaduri and Bijaydas Bhaduri were the principal forwards in this team and Reverend Sudhir Chatterjee the leading defender. Years after Sudhir recollected going down to the Ganges with friends and supporters to bath in celebration of the victory. As they returned, they met with an elderly gentleman and told him of the victory of the Mohun Bagan team, upon which the old man pointed to the British flag aloft Fort William and demanded to know when they would be achieving their next victory by 'pulling that flag down'.<sup>1</sup> Celebrations in the city of Calcutta, still flinching from the brutal suppression of the Swadeshi campaign, continued for some three days afterwards. Such was the sentiments aroused by these events.

Just as the British appropriated Polo from Mughal and Rajput princes, so the British games of football and cricket became targets for appropriation by Indians. The Calcutta Cricket Club is the second oldest in the world, but the game there (being the capital) was commanded by the British. In Bombay, by contrast, it was the Parsi community who took the initiative and formed the first Oriental Cricket Club in 1848, typically bowling underarm and playing in *pyjamas* and *bandis* (aprons) with a handkerchief tied around their heads to ward off the sun. It only lasted for two years, but had many successors on the Esplanade, the home of Indian cricket, as opposed to the Bombay Gymkhana, where the English practised. The Parsi Gymkhana was finally established in 1885, followed the year after by the first tour of England by the Parsi cricket team. Bombay Hindus followed by forming the Union Cricket Club in 1866, whilst the Mohammedan Cricket Club was founded in 1883. By the beginning of the twentieth century all three clubs were competing in the Presidency tournament (communal teams being characteristic of Bombay) and the initial fame of the Parsis was somewhat eclipsed. It was at this point that Indians began to make an impact in organised sporting competitions throughout the subcontinent.

The popularity of cricket undoubtedly derived from its similarity to games of stick and ball which have been played in India since times immemorial. The best known of these games is *galli danda*, also known as *galli kanya* in Rajasthan, where it is played with a wooden stick (the *kanya*), pointed at one end, anywhere from one and a half feet to a yard long, and a piece of wood that serves as the ball (the *gulli*), about 4-5 inches long. Other types of team games like this played in Mewar include *satoliya*, where seven stones are piled one on top of the other and then a ball thrown, knocking them all down, and *mar dari* (this one played by just two's three's), with a cloth ball. On *Makar Sankranti* (a holiday falling on Jan. 14th) children play all three of these games. Such games could be played pretty much all the year round, and required the barest of equipment and facilities. Similar characteristics facilitated the spread of cricket, and Indian cricketers soon began to build a reputation for themselves.

C.K. Nayudu was one of the earliest Indians to acquire fame through playing within the subcontinent: in his case in the Indian Quadrangular tournament, which from 1916 onwards was the principal competition before the Ranji trophy was established in the mid 1930s. Described as 'the first great Indian cricketer', C.K. Nayudu's distinction lay in the explosiveness of his batting and the all roundness of his skills, which were entirely home grown.<sup>2</sup> Nayudu led India in its first official test tour of England and also captained India at home against England in 1933-34. Nayudu's legendary hitting of sixes brings to mind one of C.L.R. James' theories about cricket: that in a colonial society hedged with rules and regulations, cricket was the one activity in which young Indians and West Indians were permitted, if not encouraged, to hit beyond the boundaries. The fact that Nayudu was subsequently dropped by the selectors merely added to his popularity, his performances invariably being accompanied by garlands. According to E.L. Docker's *History of Indian cricket*, his most singular contribution to nationalist sentiment was a score of 153 with 13 sixes against at the Bombay Gymkhana against the visiting MCC side of 1926-7. The response was rapturous, and afterwards the textile workers of Parel held a reception in his honour, presenting him with a cheque. The Bombay batsman, Vijay Merchant, a member of a leading industrial family, was more conspicuously patriotic, withdrawing himself from the England team in 1932 at the height of the civil disobedience movement.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst such large-scale cricket matches were mainly an urban phenomenon, football was to be found throughout rural India, most predominantly in Goa, Punjab and Bengal. In the present day, bright bags of footballs are to be seen on sale in almost every village outside Calcutta and in the early evening thousands of games with players in their twos, threes and fives take place. The development of the sport was undoubtedly damaged by the experience of Partition, and to this day lacks recognition: the Government of India's tourist website lacking any mention of it, although cricket, polo, hockey, lawn tennis, golf and dozens of traditional sports are described. The omission is perhaps significant, since Games, as Mills describes, have tended to cause profound divisions as to what is the correct form of 'Indian-ness'. In a debate which manifests a classic cleavage of tradition versus modernity, many have argued that the game of *kabaddi* a traditional game as well as a team sport requiring discipline and co-ordination, was adopted by Hindu nationalists of the R.S.S. in an attempt to stress their social mobility as well as the modernity of their outlook. Yet others have illustrated the role that traditional Indian wrestlers played in local communal conflicts. However interpreted, the relationship between Indian nationalism, cultural revivalism and sport are clearly apparent.

As elsewhere in the world, gang warfare and protection rackets have been linked with pugilism and the martial arts in impoverished inner city areas. Religious and cultural revivalist leaders were also great advocates of sport. This is hardly surprising, since the history of sports linked with religion dates back to Vedic times. Physical perfection has indeed always been an integral part of Hinduism, one of the means to fully realise one's Self being defined as the body-way or *dehvada*. In this way, salvation (*nirvanha*) was to be gained through physical perfection or *kaya sadhana*, achieved through perfect understanding of the body and its functions. The key to the popular exercise of *hatha yoga* is strength, stamina and control of the body functions with the aim of achieving a fusion of meditation and physical movement: the 'eight-fold method' encompassing techniques associated with breathing control or *pranayama*, body posture or *asanas*, and withdrawal of the senses or *pratyahara*.

Apart from the religious aspect, in the age of the Rig-Veda, Ramayana and Mahabharata Princes and men of importance were normally expected to be competent in chariot-racing, archery, horsemanship, military tactics, wrestling, weight-lifting, swimming and hunting. The weapons involved in war and hunting exercises included the bow and arrow, the dagger, the axe and the mace. Amongst these weapons of war the javelin (*toran*) and discus (*chakra*), were also used in sports. The earthly incarnation of Vishnu, Lord Krishna himself was said to have thrown the discus, whilst Arjuna and Bhima, two of the mighty Pandava warriors, excelled in archery and weightlifting respectively. Even the Buddha, is said to have been an expert at archery, chariot - racing, equitation and hammer – throwing. Later on the Mughal emperors were keen hunters of wild game, and avid patrons of sports, especially wrestling, the Agra fort and the Red Fort being popular venues for wrestling bouts in the days of the Emperor Shahjahan.

Even karate can be said to have an Indian origin: Kerala's martial art form, *kalari payattu*, being very similar. Those who practice it develop acrobatic capabilities, whilst using swords or knives. With the advent of Buddhism, Buddhist monks who travelled, mostly unarmed, to spread the teachings of the Buddha, used this form of self – defence, along with alternatives that were suitable to their philosophy of non - violence. The relationship between a student and teacher in the disciplines of Judo and Karate can perhaps trace its roots to the Indian guru-shishya tradition. At the same time, the technique of *pranayama* or breathing control, which is a prominent feature of tae-kwan-do, karate, judo and sumo wrestling was one of the techniques spread by Buddhist pilgrims. The idea that man enters into harmony with the five elements, through the science of breathing, is referred to in many Vedic texts. If mind and body are one, and controlled, the possibilities of developing one's physical and mental capabilities are said to be limitless. Using this as the foundation, Bodhidharma, a Buddhist monk, started a movement in the Shaolin temple in China, from which probably stem many of the rules and precepts which govern the martial arts of east asia to this day.

Amongst the best known of twentieth century Indian revivalists and nationalists, Swami Vivekananda in Bengal, revisited some of these ideas, preaching that '*jiva* is *Shiva*': that every being is a part of God; that Indians should have muscles of iron and nerves of steel; and that they should 'awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached'. The Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.), however, went as far as the Nazi party in Germany in its espousal of physical training as a means to strengthen and revive the nation. Since its foundation in 1925, mass uniform displays of gymnastics were, and still are to this day, a characteristic feature at R.S.S. rallies, along with a variety of displays in unarmed or lathi-wielding combat. In the local level branches of the society however, games of pursuit with names such as 'strengthening the nation' are taught to young male recruits of school age in order to inculcate the notion that play, physical fitness and patriotism are intimately related. Amongst older children and teenagers, games of pursuit such as *kho-kho* are practised (which allegedly used to be played on chariots in ancient times), along with *kabbadi* - known as *chedugudu* or *hu-tu-tu* in southern parts of India, *hadudu* (amongst men) and *chu-kit-kit* (women) in eastern India. The game is meant to develop self defence, in addition to responses to attack, and reflexes of counter attack and is seen by some even as a form of training for armed combat in crowd situations.

More than the martiality which they express, however, the importance of traditional sports lies in the possibilities they offer for cultural and national assertion: the development of the inner, private space, as Partha Chatterjee, has described it, as a basis for opposition to colonial imperialism. Ironically, prior to 1857, the Bengali sepoy was the backbone of the East India Company's army in India, but after the Mutiny of the Bengal army, effeminacy and cowardice were epithets commonly ascribed to the Bengali character, whilst Sikh regiments loyal to the British were correspondingly lauded for their martial spirit. The importance of games such as *kabbadi* lay in their claims to longevity. This permitted an insistence that despite being conquered and ruled by others, the cause of this was treachery and not any lack of vigour or virility, as claimed by colonial commentators. Quite apart from this, most obviously, traditional sports, yogic exercise and swinging *joris* (clubs) at the local *ahkara* (gymnasium) offer a simple and convenient way to keep fit, thus accounting for their enduring and widespread popularity in cities and small towns to this day.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its obvious political and social importance, as outlined above, the role of sport in South Asian society has nonetheless rarely been the subject of academic analysis. Until recently sport has been neglected by sociologists and anthropologists and political scientists. Why this is so is a mystery but perhaps the belief that sport was primarily an issue that concerned the physical body rather than the body politic meant that too many commentators did not see sport as integral to a society's socio-political and historical belief system. Recent studies have addressed this absence of knowledge illustrating very well that sport is a crucial component of civil society (cf. Allison 1998, Archetti 1999, Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997 and 1999, Hargreaves 1986, Putnam 1993) whilst others have presented compelling evidence of how games contain within them crucial elements of the wider social order (cf. Bromberger

1993, Dyck 2000, Geertz 1973, Guttman 1994, Houlihan 1994, Jarvie and Maguire 1994). Interest in sport in relation to ethnicity has produced interesting analysis from amongst others Jarvie 1991, MacClancy 1996, and Verma 1994 and in Britain the issue of the South Asian diasporas sporting involvement has produced a number of recent works (Bains and Patel 1996, Bains and Johal 1998, Long et al 1997, Werbner 1996, Fleming 1989, 1991, 1994, 1995). However the recent massive tome by Coakley and Dunning (2000) whilst 558 pages in length and consisting of 44 chapters can find space for only two pages on India (MacDonald 2000) which is something of an under-representation for over 850 million people.

The paucity of studies on India has been addressed over 15 years ago by Hargreaves (1986:108) who stated then that the role of sport in Asian culture is not adequately understood and more recently by MacDonald (ibid) who identifies two significant explanations; the slow recognition that the discipline of sociology has in Indian academic life and the hindrance the discipline has had to suffer hitherto dominated by Eurocentric developmental economics.

Whilst a reader can find ethnographic accounts of wrestling in North India (Alter 1992) and learn of the Afghan buzhashi contests as a metaphor for political processes (Azoy 1982 see also Miles and Khan 1988) or see how Pakistani cricket is the basis for both familial and political alliances (Parkes 1996) and read overviews of the role of sport in Asia (Wagner 1989) or learn of parental attitudes towards sport in one Indian state (Gupta 1987) or hear about the travels in pursuit of sporting occasions in the region (Levine 2000) little is available specifically on the role of sport in South Asia. This makes the following chapters in this collection relevant and timely. As Jim Mills argues in the first chapter the hitherto lacunae of sports related studies of the South Asian population is based on the still persistent dual myths that Indians do not engage in sport and those that do are somehow unrepresentative of their society and culture. Such opinions are unwitting reflections of those pervasive under colonial rule which considered the local male as lacking the physical prowess needed to withstand the rigours and requirements of the colonists team games. To emphasise the relevance of studies of sport in South Asia to our knowledge the author quotes the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai who whilst recognising the role of the sport of wrestling in Northern India also states that the same pursuit in South Asia:

'Transcends the categories that anthropologists and others have traditionally used to interpret Indian society and culture. It is a sport, but it is also an elaborate way of life involving prescriptions of physical culture, diet, health, ethics and morality' (Appadurai 1996:45)

Traditional sports thus offer the possibility for transcending much is conditioned and determined in academic inquiry by eurocentrism and the colonial experience. It is nonetheless the legacy of British colonial rule that has attracted most scholarly research into the role of sport, especially that of cricket which is something of a national obsession in India and the analysis of which has produced some excellent history (Cashman 1980) and very readable social commentary (Marquess 1996). Some consider the game was a way of inculcating the Indian social elite into a Victorian morality that valued esprit de corps at the same time that it bonded a population divided on language, religion and ethnicity (Holt 19xx). This ideal however was not realised, as the exclusive European clubs stressed their social and sporting separateness. Yet whilst the Indian elite first played the game the entire social spectrum soon joined in and talent was instrumental in forcing the Indian elite's to challenge their prejudices against their fellow men and admit them into their clubs. The 'meaning' of cricket is an issue that Mills analyses to show that there is no one essential ideology that the game can be said to have. It means different things to different regions but reflects a variety of historical and social transformations within Indian society pertaining to relations with the colonists, bodily practices, and the development of communalistic identities. In the post-colonial context the game has been considered as a means of developing national identity and idealised masculinity and as a consequence has become a contested arena for those with money and power who seek a wider international stage for their aspirations.

Football was another means used to inculcate into the native born the values of the empire. Introduced into the curriculum of elite schools and promoted by the occupying military to combat boredom and promote fitness. Quoting a variety of authors who present this case, Mills adds the fascinating possibility of the role of mimicry into these processes. Whilst the rhetoric stressed the role that football played in inclusion the reality was that the clubs of the colonists remained exclusive and, contrary to expectations, the game became a vehicle for both nationalism and communalism. A very different-Portuguese and Catholic - colonial context in Goa saw football produce a sense of both difference and loyalty. The latter was most evident in the clubs established amongst the Goan diaspora; the former, Mills argues, has seen the unique position of Goa in South Asia consistently played out via the football pitch. The same need for a people to retain their notions of independence in the shadow of a larger neighbour was instrumental in the promotion of football in Tibet by the British fearful of the Russians. Adopted by the Dalai Lama and Buddhist monks, football was decades later banned as a foreign influence corrosive to local mores. Thus the game was not able to develop because in this instance the political elite could resist the colonial designs, even those under the guise of sport.

Designs of another complexion namely commercialisation and globalisation are at large in the football world in contemporary India. Economic liberalisation in the 1990's has seen south Asia become a battleground for world wide corporate interests many of whom saw football clubs as ideal vehicles to promote their image and product. This has changed the structure and personnel of the game yet has not been entirely a one way process. Local institutions and powerful individuals have the ability to thwart the best intentions of the corporate giants. At the same time the development of the game itself is subject to specific Indian conditions, in that the participation of youth in the game is hostage to their socio-economic position i.e. the need to work to survive and the near absence in some districts of any space to kick a ball. Even the schools that promote football do not always serve the game well, with poor coaching methods and underhand means of attaining success prevalent. Whether the future success of the game lies in expensive football academies is open to debate. Whilst Mills admits that there is still much work to be done, his comprehensive chapter offers an excellent insight into just how important sport has been and remains in south Asian cultures. The role of sport is not to be dismissed as trivial, indeed sport has been implicated in most of the processes that have produced societies within the region.

One particular population who have manifested a remarkable ability in sport in south Asia are the Anglo-Indians. In chapter two Megan Mills presents an historical analysis of the processes and people whose sporting enthusiasm and abilities have made them synonymous with Indian sporting success. This chapter offers an interesting debate on the role of creolization and sporting ability, an issue which is evident when one considers historically where in the world, and which populations within them, play Rugby and Cricket and Polo, and is equally relevant in contemporary times when one can witness grid-iron football in Malta. Challenging assumptions that would simplistically condemn all colonial innovations in India as evidence of cultural domination, the author emphasises the agency of Indians and illustrates the admiration shown by millions towards sporting achievement be it individual or collective and argues that it has no parallel in other aspects of Indian social life. Significantly, even today sports derived from the West remain amongst the foremost leisure pursuits of the Indian nation.

The Anglo-Indians, products of marriages between indigenous women and men employed by the East India Company, held an ambiguous status being considered both the substandard physical products of miscegenation and considered a political risk to the 'pure' European that the colonial rulers of India considered themselves to be. Having proven loyal subjects in the 1857 rebellion, and considered commercially useful due to their command of language, they were periodically conscripted and served with distinction. The assumption that their mixed marriage made them indolent and unemployable in heavy labouring tasks assigned them in the eyes of the colonial authorities a second class status. Out of this developed a compensatory culture bound up in the communal life available in the church, school and sports clubs that dominated the occupational communities and enclaves they lived in. Employed in the development of the railway as well as in the police, public works and forest administration each enclave

would normally pursue a sporting specialism be it football, tennis, athletics, or boxing. In later years when admitted into the military the Anglo-Indians excelled in both sport and in combat.

The game of hockey is the one for which the Anglo-Indians are renowned. Played in India for well over 100 years the modest requirements that permitted participation well suited local conditions. It could also be played all year round and allowed women as well as men to exercise. Out of this enthusiasm came no fewer than six consecutive Olympic gold medals between 1928 -1956 featuring men's teams dominated by players drawn from Anglo-Indian settlements. By the time of the 1960 Olympics the Indian defeat of Australia saw Anglo-Indians in the latter team, the game having taken off as a consequence of Anglo-Indian migration. As Megan Mills illustrates with many examples, hockey provided many a sporting legend and much folklore around hockey 'personalities'. The game was significant in women's circles as well. Different from many women in India in working outside of the home in education, nursing and the military, Anglo-Indian women until the 1960's provided most of the players for the national hockey selections.

The Anglo-Indians proved to be sporting all-rounders. They took up boxing, which they learned from the British military and proved of such competence at it that they were the Indian boxing Olympians in the 1948, and 1952 games. The schools of the Anglo-Indians played cricket before it attracted a mass following throughout India and their contribution to the development of track and field events is enormous. Today in India the role of sport in the school curriculum is an enduring legacy to the Anglo-Indians. Even abroad, following migrations in the 1960's to Canada and Australia, Anglo-Indian communities are typified by their participation in sports. Such participation has been and will remain crucial in the construction of national pride via sporting success and will continue to play a part in constructing a pan-Indian unity. On a more personal level the memories of the Anglo-Indian games mistress and coach remains an enduring memory in many an Indian sporting biography.

Alongside sporting success and glory comes defeat and ignominy. In his timely chapter on the politics of cricket and colonialism (timely, when one considers the furore over accusations of poor sportsmanship and cheating emanating from the visitors and their media followers that surrounded the Sri Lanka - England Test Series in early 2001) Satadru Sen examines how cricket has taken on new forms of significance in recent years due to the revelations of match-fixing at international level. Arguing that cricket provides for debates about race, gender, culture, it is the contention of Sen that cricket in India grew out of the need for England to have a playing field containing nationally defined opponents. This has implications for what follows; according to the author the game also permits for the casting of aspersions over notions of moral authority and masculinity.

To illustrate this point the author presents two case studies. The first looks at the responses to revelations made public in winter 2000 that the South African cricket captain, Hansie Cronje, had agreed a deal with an Indian bookmaker to under-perform in a forthcoming Test match against India. Three responses to this action are chronicled. The first, 'reflexive denial', was a response of incredulity that anyone from a white Christian culture could involve themselves in such chicanery. When the evidence was compelling the debate suggested that the Indian milieu was to blame with the implication that an innate and all-pervasive Indian immorality had seduced white moral purity. The second, was satisfaction and fascination on behalf of the Indian nation. The confession of guilt from Cronje vindicated the inquiry. However further inquiries revealed that Indian players were equally implicated in under-hand dealings. The third, questioned how such procedures had entered cricket, a past-time seen by many as above greed and corruption, or as the author so poetically puts it: 'A cultural island of innocence in a world of mobile phones and globalised greed'.

Implicit in much of what is presented is the notion that cricket is above politics (and religion). Of course this is a myth. As far back as the early 1960's CLR James (1963) noted how individual brilliance on the crease spoke for a nation and others have noted how victory on the field can offer a form of political liberation (Beckles 1995) and be the arena wherein populations can test constructs of cultural identity and

pride (Marqusee 1995 MacDonald 1999, Williams 2001). Thus we see the West Indian crowds inverting the English language and its racial overtones in holding aloft banners celebrating the “Blackwash” of the English national team as it succumbed to a 5-0 defeat in the 1980’s. In the figure of Imran Khan, Pakistan had a captain who was at the same time the playboy of the western world whilst stressing his devotion to Islam when at home possibly personifying Pakistan’s ambiguous pursuit of modernity. The recent deaths of Don Bradman and Shakoor Rana and the obituaries that followed illustrate the massive influence the game of cricket can have in both a nation’s psyche and international politics. In Bradman, Australia had a national icon who helped to both forge Australian national identity and celebrate it when defeating the English between 1936-48. A hero to his own people his funeral attracted a staggering TV audience of 100 million in India. The death of Shakoor Rana was mostly remembered for his head-to-head and finger-to-finger confrontation with the England captain Mike Gatting during the 1987 tour of Pakistan. Having made mutual accusations of cheating play was stopped for a day whilst the politics of the occasion was played out. The Pakistani captain Javed Miandad insisted that Gatting issue a written apology arguing that the honour of his country was at stake. The English Test and County Cricket Board also asked Gatting to write an apology yet gave every England player a £1000 ‘hardship bonus’. Gatting produced a curt (and mis-spelled) apology on scrap paper. It was 13 years before England visited Pakistan again. Controversy took on a different dimension a decade later when in June 1997 the Indian all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar revealed an attempt to bribe him to the tune of £35,000 before a Test with Pakistan which implicated five other Indian players. For those who believe sport reflects society we could do well to recognise that Indians are fully aware that their leading politicians are open to bribery as recently revealed when journalists posing as arms manufacturers compromised the president of the BJP

As Sen so rightly argues cricket has always been about self-aggrandisement and politics and was never a stranger to gambling. Central to the efforts of promoting the values of a colonial society, the game later became a vehicle for nationalist sentiments and today is intensely political not only in its various attempts at social exclusion but the post-Kerry Packer era has seen the entry into international cricket of those who do not worry about the ‘Institutional disadvantages and condescension’s that once went with ‘professional’ status’.

The second strand of Sen’s chapter concerns the life story of a remarkable Indian cricketer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by the name of Kumar Shri Ranjitsinghji. At a surface level his story illustrates the success that sporting achievement can provide in breaking down barriers of race and culture. However the author’s research illustrates that such ostensible inclusion was only achieved at a price namely the need for the player to re-invent his racial, gendered, and political identity whilst playing in England. Playing for Cambridge university he went on to become the first non-white county level player in England and then played for the national team, a selection that caused debates as to what constituted ‘Englishness’ and which provokes the author to describe the treatment accorded to him as that akin to becoming an ‘imperial exhibit’ wherein his sporting body became a board upon which English observers could inscribe their assumptions about Selves and Others which contained both moral and erotic significance.

Phlegmatic beyond belief when shot in the eye by an aristocratic shooting companion and insistent upon being awake to watch an operation performed on his elbow the English commentators of the time spoke of his Oriental effeminacy and non-threatening masculinity. His adoration in English circuiting circles did not extend to his home country when he returned. Denied access to the white colonial world he still fought with the Allies in France during the Great War before returning to champion the rights of Indians occasionally expressed in cricketing terms. As Sen concludes the game can be both a performance of colonialism and a form of anti-colonial theatre. Be it in the story of ‘Ranji’ or the accusations around Hansie, cricket in India provides for Imperialistic Selves and Others what the author describes as ‘..Fantasies of difference, ownership and self-congratulation’.

Issues of ownership, self-congratulation and fantasy pervade the game of football the world over (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997, 2001, Finn and Giulianotti 2000, Giulianotti 2000) The popularity of the



game in India has tended to be under-stated yet in the eyes of many it is as popular as cricket. The role of football in India has attracted British scholars but the two previous academic accounts did not engage with the indigenous people or their account of events. The work of Mangan (1986) details the life of Protestant missionary Cecil Earle Tyndale-Biscoe who in late nineteenth century Kashmir seem to have somewhat bullied the local young men into playing football. The research tells of one incident where a player is struck in the face by the leather ball, for the Hindu the leather was considered unholy and after the game he was disowned by his family. The author is seemingly approving of the work of the missionary whilst failing to seek accounts on the events from the perspective of the local people about the era and the man in question. The historical account offered by Mason (1900) tells the story of the 1911 FA Shield victory of Mohan Bagun . Based on local press cuttings (available in the British Library) and a 1959 book titled ‘ A Portrait of Indian Sport’ by DeMello Mason argues that the victory had multiple (if somewhat confusing and even contradictory) outcomes in that it instilled a self confidence in the people of Calcutta , yet it had no political significance yet at the same time it raised the respect the local people had for their political masters because the vanquished were so gracious in their defeat. Evidently first hand research is needed and combining a variety of techniques from archive research to ethnography Paul Dimeo has and promises to produce in future publications the definitive account of the role that football has played in the history and politics of India.

In chapter four Dimeo builds on his previous ground- breaking work on Indian football (see Dimeo 2001) to present a brief analysis of a three match tour of England in July 2000 by the Indian national side. Over 50 years had passed since a previous visit in 1948. Occurring only one year after India had attained independence the pioneering tour was considered as symbolic of an emergent nation seeking self-sufficiency. The author examines the changes that have occurred in the interim and asks what exactly the latest tour represented.

As Dimeo illustrates, the contemporary game is caught between tradition and modernity. Assuming control of the game from the British in the 1930's the indigenous administrators have failed to resolve the problems that, it would seem, have restricted the national development of the game. Operating on a regional basis has hindered the formation of a footballing national unity and whilst the willingness to give each state F.A. equal status was well intentioned it was also naïve in not recognising the great variation in football enthusiasm. Controlled still by amateur administrators at the peak of which sit those who run proceedings as if they were personal fiefdoms the game has been plagued by illegal payments to players and the absence of formal and legal restrictions on transfers which gives some credence to the opinion of the Indian author Bose who has argued that India is not sufficiently organised for top class sport (1986;18) Whilst the issue as to whether to play bare-footed has long been resolved, it is significant that this loaded issue cost India its one chance to participate in the world Cup finals in 1950. Despite all of this the game has a fanatical following, particularly in the Bengal region, wherein the capital city of Calcutta has been home to the Indian FA since 1893.

The game of football in India has served a variety of political purposes. It has been both a focus of nationalism, when local selections proved capable of defeating the teams of the occupying military, and a stage for the playing out of communal religious differences which were exacerbated by the mass-migration of peoples following the re-writing of state borders. In Calcutta the two clubs, East Bengal and Mohun Bagan became and remain the focus for the tensions between the new arrivals and the old indigenous communities respectively. The clubs function as institutions that assist newcomers to find their feet in a new society. However, their existence was not simply altruistic, since the clubs fans take with them in their support both a football and religious rivalry. The huge crowds (regularly over 100,000) that attend this derby game are capable of serious violence: one game in 1980 produced a stampede that left 16 dead. Whilst the rivalry today is not so intense amongst second and third generation migrant fans, the fixture still offers fans the chance to articulate differences and thus split the city in two. The need for both sides to win this encounter leads the author to suggest that this parochialism has hampered a need for long-term pan-national football development.

Dimeo presents evidence of how football in India has regionally specific receptivities. The Bagan club are content in their local footballing pre-eminence but have to compete with the Goan clubs for the national title. No fewer than three of the Indian first division clubs are drawn from the Goa district which has regarded the game as a way of protecting its separate socio-historical identity since integrating with India in 1961. The relative absence of 'tribal' identities around the game in Goa are considered to be the keystone to its clubs' historical successes. With clubs owned by wealthy patrons, footballing competition here is based more on the idea of dynasty than ethnicity. Promoted and sustained by the clerics of the Portuguese Catholic Church, the colonists of Goa did not use the game as a means of cultural imperialism. In turn it never became the focus for resistance and partisan fandom is somewhat muted when compared to events in Calcutta.

Inseparable from contemporary football the world over is international capitalism. As Dimeo shows, International capital appeared on the Indian scene in the mid-1990's to challenge the absence of a national league and the haphazard transfer system and media coverage. Philips sponsored the National League begun in 1996 firstly, then Coca-Cola, but arguments concerning TV transmission and marketing have frustrated the new footballing entrepreneurs. However as Appadurai (1990) has argued the processes of globalisation are multi-directional encompassed in his five part classification of disjunctures. Rejecting notions of core-periphery in culture flow Appadurai argues for there being cultural products that exist beyond ideas of national boundaries producing 'sameness and difference on a stage characterised by radical disjunctures between sorts of global flows and the uncertain landscapes created in and through these disjunctures' (308). Modernity (exemplified by professional commercial interests) it would seem is involved in a battle with Indian footballing tradition (amateur-bureaucratic) and in its aims is drawing upon the wealth and football enthusiasm of the Indian diaspora in Europe. The 2000 tour of England was the product of British Asian businessmen who saw untapped commercial opportunities in Indian football. The tour was also aimed at raising the profile of the Indian game both amongst an international audience and amongst British Asians. Whilst these aims are being addressed, it would seem, at an early stage, the absence of social commentary in pursuit of commerce seems to have concerned some onlookers. But as Dimeo notes there is a long way to go until India achieves footballing success because even in contemporary India 'unity for a common cause is the most unlikely dream'.

The migration of football players is a phenomenon loaded with issues of international capital, core-periphery economies, the morality of exploiting cheap labour and the creativity in 'proving' grandparents of European origin, or, if all else fails, faking a European passport. The migration of footballers is becoming a major issue for the football authorities to address, at the same time that lawyers specialising in international labour law are arguing the over the issues of freedom of movement. Academics have recently taken an interest in these processes (see Bale and McGuire, 1994, Darby, 2001 and Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001) albeit none has addressed the migration of African footballers to India. Consequently the final contribution to this collection by Novy Kapadia is a timely reminder that migration happens the world over and not from peripherals to core economies and this biographical account details the footballing career of Chima Okorie, a Nigerian migrant to India from the mid-1980s to late 1990s. Deliberately sent by parents to a South Indian University where, they believed, football would not interfere with his studies, a university games teacher recognised his potential and used it to the benefit of the university team. Soon the big clubs of Calcutta took an interest continuing a trend begun in the 1980s in Indian football of trying to attract decent migrant footballing talent. During the 1990s Okorie was the Indian League's top scorer for seven seasons becoming both a local hero and pioneering a style of play that all leading clubs pursued in their search for a similar foreign, muscular target man.

Whilst not the first foreign star in India, Okorie's success and style made him the most enduring, considered to be the inspiration in the revival of the footballing fortunes of the East Bengal club. Games against their inseparable rivals Mohun Bagan saw crowds of up to 130,000 witness derby games. As a consequence, as Kapadia explains, the life of a river fish became hazardous as footballing success was met with this culinary tradition.

The abilities of Okorie saw a century-old tradition banished in 1991 when Mohun Bagan signed him thereby ending their policy of never signing foreign players. A brief journey into the far corners of the English and Danish football Leagues saw him to return three years later to reflect on the state of the Indian game and express his concern over its many inadequacies. His career ended in 1999, ironically because of the very reasons he was considered such a star when he was accused of assaulting a referee during a East Bengal versus Mohun Bagan fixture. An inquiry found him guilty and banned him from the game for two years. Now resident in England his frequent visits to Calcutta are done with the aim of nurturing Indian footballing ability via an academy system based on what he believes is a more scientific approach to that currently available in Indian football.

In the field of athletics, finally, India has produced a number of individual champions, although with an infrequency that illustrates the role of capitalism in sport above all else. Star of the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, Gurbachan Singh Randhawa was perhaps the most versatile athlete India has ever produced, an all-rounder who was capable of excelling in a variety of sports: hurdles, the high jump and many other track and field events besides. On the advice of a coach, he decided to concentrate on the decathlon, in which sport Olympic medal evaded him although he was at the forefront of most events. Another considerable source of pride has been the Keralan born 400-metre hurdler P.T. Usha: the greatest sportswoman that India has ever produced: the winner of two silver medals at the 1982 Delhi Asiad. In the Olympic Games held in Los Angeles in 1984, Usha was second in her first heat and in her semi-final she became the first Indian athlete to win a heat at the Olympics, only to have victory snatched from her in the final race – after which she characteristically announced her retirement from competition and determination to embark upon a training career. In the Sydney Olympics in 2000, India's hopes, and this time achievements, were encapsulated by Karnam Malleswari, who won a bronze medal in the women's weightlifting competition.

Most recently still India has seen the rise of a golfing champion in Jyoti Randhawa, winner of the Indian Open golf tournament in March 2000. Nonetheless the anxiety persists that for a country of its size and population India is punching far below its weight in international competitions. This is hardly surprising since, out of a total of eighty competing nations, India found itself at the bottom of the table of medal winners at the last Olympics, with just one medal, along with Armenia, Barbados, Chile, Iceland, Israel, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Qatar, and Sri Lanka. Olympic sports all require considerable inputs of money and resources, and not least of all training facilities, which India lacks. The Olympics are thus above all a rich man's sport, dependent on individual sponsorship by private charities and the state, whereas India excels above all in team games played on the open field. It is for this reason that the government of India has lobbied the Olympic federation to include *kabbadi* amongst the Olympic sports – arguing that it is played throughout South Asia (including Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal), as well as in Japan, and hence by nearly one fifth of the world's population. It is unlikely that the lobby will be successful, but there can be little doubt that if games such as cricket, polo, *kabbadi* and *kho-kho* had included the outcome of the Sydney 2000 competition would have been very different.

## Acknowledgements

The authors are indebted to Richard Giulianotti, Paul Dimeo, Tryna Lyons and Brij Mohan Jawaliya for their constructive suggestions in the proof stages of this chapter.

## Bibliography

- Allison, L. (1998) (ed) *Taking Sport Seriously*. Aachen: Mayer and Mayer.  
 Alter, J. (1992) *The Wrestlers Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
 Alter, J. (2000) 'Kabbadi, A National Sport of India. The Internationalism of Nationalism and the Foreignness of Indianness' in N. Dyck, (ed) *Games, Sports and Culture*. Oxford: Berg.

- Appadurai, A. (1990) 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy' in *Theory, Culture and Society* No.7 pp. 295-310.
- Appadurai, A. (1996) 'Playing with Modernity: The Decolonisation of Indian Cricket' in C. Breckenridge (ed) *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in Contemporary India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Archetti, E. (1999) *Masculinities : Football, Polo and Tango in Argentina*. Oxford: Berg.
- Armstrong, G. and Giulianotti, R. (1997) (eds) *Entering the Field: New Perspectives in World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Armstrong, G. and Giulianotti, R. (1999) (eds) *Football Cultures and Identities*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.
- Armstrong, G. and Giulianotti, R. (2001) (eds) *Fear and Loathing in World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Azoy, G.W. (1982) *Buzkashi: Games and Power in Afghanistan*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bains, J. and Patel, R. (1996) *Asians Can't Play Football*. Solihull: Asian Social Development Agency.
- Bains, J. and Johal, S. (1998) *Corner Flags and Corner Shops. The Asian Football Experience*, London: Phoenix.
- Bale, J. and Maguire, J. (1994) (eds) *The Global Sports Arena; Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World*. London: Frank Cass.
- Beckles, H. (1995) *Liberation Cricket*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bose, M. (1986) *A Maidens View: The Magic of Indian Cricket*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Bromberger, C. (1993) 'Allez l'O.M., Forza Juve: The passion for football in Marseille and Turin' in S. Redhead (ed) *The Passion and The Fashion. Football Fandom in the New Europe*. Aldershot: Arena..
- Coakley, J. and Dunning, E. (2000) (eds) *Handbook of Sports Studies*. London: Sage.
- Cashman, R. (1980) *Patrons, Players and the Crowd: The Phenomenon of Indian Cricket*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Darby, P. (2001) 'The Scramble for Africa. A Preliminary Analysis of African Labour Migration to Europe' in the *European Sports History Review* Vol.3
- Dimeo, P. (2001) 'Team Loyalty splits the City in Two: Football, Ethnicity and Rivalry in Calcutta' in G. Armstrong and R. Giulianotti (eds) *Fear and Loathing in World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Dyck, N. (2000) (ed) *Games, Sports and Cultures*. Oxford: Berg.
- Fleming, S. (1989) 'Asian Lifestyles and Sports Participation' in A. Tomlinson (ed) *Youth Culture and the Domain of Leisure*. Leisure Studies Association No. 35
- Fleming, S. (1991) 'Sport, Schooling and Asian Male Youth' in G. Jarvie (ed) *Sport, Racism and Ethnicity*. London: Falmer.
- Finn, G.P.T. and Giulianotti, R. (2000) (eds) *Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions*. London: Frank Cass.
- Fleming, S. (1994) 'Sport and South Asian Youth: The Pursuit of False Universalism and Stereotyping' in *Leisure Studies* No.13 pp. 159-177.
- Fleming, S. (1995) *Home and Away: Sport and South Asian Male Youth*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. London: Fontana.
- Gupta, S.K. (1987) 'Parents and Teachers Attitudes and Reaction Towards Participation In Sports By Young Athletes of a University in an Indian State' in *International Review for Sports Sociology*, 22 pp. 305-316.
- Guttman, A. (1994) *Games and Empires. Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hargreaves, J. (1986) *Sport, Power and Culture. A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Houlihan, B. (1994) *Sport and International Politics*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Jarvie, G. (1991) (ed) *Sport, Racism and Ethnicity*. London: Falmer.
- Jarvie, G. and Maguire, J. (1994) *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought*. London: Routledge.
- Lanfranchi, P. and Taylor, M. (2001) *Moving With the Ball. The Migration of Professional Footballers*. Oxford: Berg.
- Levine, E. (2000) *A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat*. London: Andre Deutsch.

- Long, J., Carrington, B. and Spracklan, K. (1997) "Asians Cannot Wear Turbans in the Scrum": Explorations of Racist Discourse Within Professional Rugby League in *Leisure Studies* 16, 4 pp. 249-59.
- MacClancy, J. (1996) (ed) *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*. Oxford: Berg.
- MacDonald, I. (1999) 'Between Saleem and Shiva: The Politics of Cricket Nationalism in Globalising India.' In J. Sugden and A. Bairner (eds) *Sport in Divided Societies*. Aachen: Meyer and Meyer.
- Marquess, M. (1994) *Anyone But England*. London: Verso.
- Marquess, M. (1996) *War Minus the Shooting: A Journey Through South Asia During Cricket's World Cup*. London: Heinemann.
- Mangan, J. (1986) *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*. London: Frank Cass.
- Mason, T. (1990) 'Football on the Maiden: Cultural Imperialism in Calcutta' in *International Journal of the History of Sport*. Vol 12 No. 1 pp xxxxxxxx
- Miles, K. and Khan, R. (1988) *Jahangir and the Khan Dynasty*. London: Pelham.
- Parkes, P. (1996) 'Indigenous Polo and the Politics of Regional Identity in Northern Pakistan' in J. MacClancy (ed) *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*. Oxford: Berg.
- Putnam, R. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- MacDonald, I. (2000) 'India' in J. Coakley and E. Dunning (eds) *Handbook of Sports Studies*. London: Sage. pp. 539-541
- Verma, G.K. (1996) (ed) *Winners and Losers: Ethnic Minorities in Sport and Recreation*. London: Falmer.
- Wagner, E.A. (1989) (ed) *Sport in Asia and Africa. A Comparative Handbook*. London: Greenwood.
- Werbner, P. (1996) 'Our Blood is Green': Cricket, Identity and Social Empowerment Among British Pakistanis' in J. MacClancy (ed) *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*. Oxford: Berg
- Williams, J. (2001) *Cricket and Race*. Oxford: Berg.

Dr Gary Armstrong joined the Department of Sports Sciences at Brunel University in 2001. He has written *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score* (1998), *Blade Runners: Lives in Football* (1998), and co-edited (with Richard Giulianotti) *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football* (1997), *Football Cultures and Identities* (1999), and *Fear and Loathing in World Football* (2001). Two further collections on sport and gender and football in Africa are due to be published next year as is a co-authored book on the role of patrons and politics in Maltese football.

Dr. Crispin Bates is a Reader in Modern South Asian History and Director, Centre for South Asian Studies, at the University of Edinburgh, where he has taught since 1989. His recent publications include *Community, Empire and Migration: South Asians in Diaspora* (ed.) (Palgrave, 2001) and *Subalterns and the Raj: a history of modern South Asia* (Routledge, forthcoming).

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This anecdote, although corroborated by others may be apocryphal, is as recounted by Pr. Gautam Chattopadhyay, formerly of Surendranath College. Born a decade after the event, Gautam heard the story often in the 1940s during his 'street-fighting days' against the British.

<sup>2</sup> Ramchandran Guha, *An Anthropologist amongst the Marxists* (Delhi 2000), pp. 223-227.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Akharas are a common-place feature of everyday life in Banaras, although women are not so much involved in athletics as they used to be in the past, according to Nita Kumar, *Friends, Brothers and Informants: Fieldwork Memoirs of Banaras* (University of California Press, 1992).